

# MENNONITE HISTORICAL BULLETIN

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No. 1

## Westward Ho—1884

IRA D. LANDIS

When bleeding Kansas came into the Union in 1861, Mennonites had not yet moved into the state. The first Mennonites in Kansas were the Kilmers, Goods, Heatwoles, Bares, Neuenschwanders, and Hornbergers in 1871-1873 in Marion and McPherson counties, with occasional services by Henry Yother of Nebraska in a schoolhouse near Marion Center.<sup>1</sup>

From 1873 to 1880 almost ten thousand Russian, Prussian, and Swiss Mennonites came to McPherson, Harvey, and Marion counties, with some aid from the Pennsylvania Executive Aid Committee through which Pre. Amos Herr, John Shenk, and Gabriel Bear of Lancaster County labored.<sup>2</sup> By that time they were accustomed to grasshoppers and droughts, so that others from eastern Pennsylvania looked that way.

In 1879 an exodus of Brethren in Christ folks, including Engles, Hoffmans, Hersheys, and Musers, left Donegal, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, for Abilene, Kansas. They loaded on wagons all their earthly possessions they desired to take along and crossed the hills to Marietta. Here they placed their miscellaneous freight on cars and boarded the same train for Pittsburgh. In the latter city they were taken for Dunkards. Notice of this was sent ahead to St. Louis, and by mistake they understood that they were drunkards. Hence a large detachment of police to their surprise greeted them at the station, only to be informed that it was a false alarm. Some such as Noah, son of Jacob Hershey, formerly of Florin, when drought hit Kansas, failed as successful farmers.<sup>3</sup>

In 1883 Pre. Jacob H. Hershey (1862-1947) (later of Lititz) and his cousin, Benjamin H. Hess, went as far as Council Bluffs, Iowa, to work, as young men did before settling down. Jacob's father went out with others to inspect central Kansas,

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## Some Little-Known Mennonite Periodicals

N. P. SPRINGER

In its attempts to collect all available material published by and about Mennonites the Mennonite Historical Library of Goshen College has located copies of approximately 350 different periodicals—in some cases complete files, in others perhaps only one or two issues. Among the



more rare titles in this collection are *Das Christliche Volks-Blatt*, *The Patriot and Reformer*, *Das Waffenlose Wächter*, and *The Weekly Echo*.

*Das Christliche Volks-Blatt*, published by the Mennonitische Druck-Verein, successor to John H. Oberholzer, of Milford Square, Pa., first appeared July 30, 1856. Having changed its name to *Der Mennonitische Friedensbote* in 1867, it finally merged with *Zur Heimath* in 1882 and was known as *Christlicher Bundesbote*, until it was discontinued in 1947. In the early days it was a four-page paper, featuring inspirational articles and news items.

Mennonites have seldom gone into the area of the secular newspaper. *The Patriot and Reformer*, a weekly bilingual paper published by J. G. Stauffer, had as its slogan: "The troubles of the Country come from uneasy politicians—its safety, from the tranquil masses." The Mennonite Historical Library has a copy of the

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## History of the Mennonites in Idaho

HENRY D. BECKER

### *The Nampa Mennonite Church*

The first Mennonite church begun in Idaho and still existing is at Nampa, which was started in 1899 as a mission after some Mennonite and Amish families had moved to that community.

The family names represented by those settlers were Shrock, Garber, Detwiler, Fletcher, Miller, Stahly, Kauffman, and Kurtz. These Mennonite and Amish families worshiped and communed together.

The first meetinghouse was built in 1900. In 1906 a new mission hall was built in which the group worshiped until 1937 when it was replaced by the present church building. In the meantime the group had been organized into a church. The church has no constitution or bylaws.

The English language has always been used in the worship services

and the group has been served by the following ministers during the past years: David Garber, Sam Kurtz, David Hilty, Amos M. Shenk, Eno Zuercher, C. K. Brenneman, John F. Bressler, Omar Miller, and at present David A. Good, Ernest S. Garber (bishop), and Robert Garber.

Originally the church was affiliated with the Kansas-Nebraska Conference but has since affiliated with the Pacific Coast Conference because of the distance.

The Mennonite Sunday school was organized in 1899 and is still active.

The young people's Bible meetings were organized in 1900 and are still being carried on. Since then the junior meetings have been started and are held in the basement of the church at the same time as the young people's meeting.

The church is also carrying on a mission Sunday school in Nampa known as "City Acres." This work was started in about 1940, and has grown to an average attendance of about forty.



### *The Filer Mennonite Church*

The second church of the same branch of Mennonites and belonging to the Pacific Coast Conference was organized at Filer, Idaho, where it is still active. The first families of this group settled there from 1911 to 1913 and were represented by the following family names: Detweiler, Honderich, Hostetler, Kulp, Miller, Sieber, Snyder, and Thut.

The church was organized in 1914 and built the first meetinghouse in 1915, which is still in use. The English language has always been used in the worship services.

The Sunday school was also organized in 1914 and is still active, and recently a mission Sunday school has been started and is meeting in a schoolhouse near Filer.

The following ministers have served this church: Samuel Honderich, J. P. Bontrager, E. S. Garber, and Louis Landis (recently ordained).

### *The Indian Cove Mennonite Church*

The third Mennonite church of the same branch and belonging to the same conference was organized in Indian Cove near Hammett, Idaho, in 1935 (?).

The first Mennonite settlers to move into that area were Elliott Zuercher and Nathan Miller (single men) in the spring of 1926. In the fall of the same year Aaron Brubaker from Ohio moved in with his family. Soon other Mennonites were attracted by opportunities offered in this community because of the low prices for land and the prospects for irrigation. After a few years a Sunday school was organized.

Ministers who have served this congregation are: Amos Shenk, Paul J. Hooley, and Paul W. Miller.

### *The Filer Mennonite Brethren in Christ Church*

Another branch of the Mennonite church represented in Idaho is the Mennonite Brethren in Christ, of which the oldest congregation in the state is located at Filer. This congregation was organized in 1906. The following family names were represented in this group: Aman, Means, Metcalf, Musses, Persell, and Tice.

This congregation built its first meetinghouse in 1908, which was rebuilt in 1910. A Sunday school had been organized in 1905 from which sprang the church organization. Meetings have always been held in the English language.

### *The Twin Falls Mennonite Brethren in Christ Church*

The second of the Mennonite Brethren in Christ churches in Idaho is located at Twin Falls. This congregation was begun in 1919 as the "Twin Falls Mission" by those dissatisfied with the modern teaching in some of the local churches. It was interdenominational and remained so for seven years. Their doctrinal statement had many similarities to the doctrinal statement of the Mennonite Brethren in Christ and so there was little difficulty in uniting with that branch of Mennonites in

1926. Some of the early members were of Mennonite origin and that may account for similarities in doctrine and discipline between the mission and the Mennonite Brethren in Christ Church.

Family names represented in the original membership are: Baker, Banta, Clos, Cox, Hushaw, Johnson, McFarland, McGregor, Meier, Miller, Moore, Porterfield, Rowan, Waite, and Weaver.

### *The Aberdeen First Mennonite Church*

The second oldest, and now the largest Mennonite congregation in the state of Idaho, is the First Mennonite Church at Aberdeen, Idaho. This congregation belongs to the General Conference of the Mennonite Church of North America. The members of this congregation came from Kansas, Oklahoma, Nebraska, Minnesota, Illinois, Ohio, Missouri, South Dakota, Montana, California, and Colorado.

The first Mennonite settlers arrived here in 1906, having come because of the opportunities offered by the new irrigation project which was in the process of being developed. At the time these settlers came there was nothing but sagebrush in this area, and they lived in tents or other crude shelters which they were able to erect. Later as time and opportunities permitted good homes were built.

In the same year, 1906, a Sunday school was organized and they met in the homes of the members. In 1907 the church was organized under the leadership of Minister Jacob Hege and a meetinghouse was erected which was used as a schoolhouse as well. The group organized with thirty-six charter members, represented by the following family names: Bartel, Dirks, Enns, Fast, Hege, Hunsinger, Leisy, Schroeder, Tiahrt, Toevs, Wedel, and Wenger.

The first elder was Jacob Hege and the first deacon Mr. J. P. Wedel, the latter living in retirement in the community and still a member of the church.

In the year 1909 Minister John B. Baer and wife of Sommerfield, Illinois, moved to the community and settled on a farm. The church extended a call to him to become pastor, and he accepted, serving for about two years.

New settlers kept coming in; so before long it was necessary to find a larger and more suitable house of worship. In the spring of 1910 the building site for a meetinghouse was chosen, the basement excavated, and by fall of the same year the building, thirty-six feet by fifty-six feet, was completed and dedicated.

During this time the now irrigated area west of Aberdeen was opened up for homesteading, and many more people came and began dry farming. The Immanuel Mennonite Church was organized to take care of the spiritual needs of the majority of this group, and Elder Jacob Hege was chosen as leader. A meetinghouse was built four miles southwest of Aberdeen.

The German language had been used for worship from the beginning at Aberdeen; but during the pastorate of J. B.

Baer the English language had begun to come in and had gained some foothold in the First Mennonite Church. At the organization of the Immanuel Mennonite Church many of the original settlers, who preferred the German language, joined the newly organized church. The Immanuel Mennonite Church continued to use the German in its services until the church was dissolved.

In 1912 a new settlement was opened up at Dubois, Idaho, and many settlers, especially from Kansas, settled there. They built a schoolhouse and worshiped in that. They had no minister and often the ministers from Aberdeen were sent there to minister to them. The new settlement prospered until 1917 to 1919 when the dry years came, when the settlement broke up and many of the people came to Aberdeen, joining one or the other of the Mennonite churches.

J. B. Baer resigned the pastorate of the First Mennonite Church in 1911 to accept the pastorate at Summerfield, Illinois. After his resignation, Albert Pletz, a Baptist minister, who had moved into the community, filled the pulpit for a time. In 1913 the church decided to elect three evangelists out of her own number, but only one of the three elected, Henry Toevs, accepted this as being a call from the Lord. He was ordained by P. R. Aeschliman on October 12, 1913.

Henry Toevs served the church until August 1, 1914, when Elmer J. Neuenschwander of Berne, Indiana, accepted the call of the church to be the pastor.

During Brother Neuenschwander's ministry eighty-two were added to its membership. The church also decided during this time to build a parsonage for the pastor, which was completed in time so that the E. J. Neuenschwander family could live in it for some time before leaving in 1920. It was also during his ministry that his home church at Berne, Indiana, donated an organ to this church. In August of 1920 E. J. Neuenschwander resigned his pastorate here to accept the pastorate of the Salem Mennonite Church at Freeman, South Dakota.

The church extended a call to E. D. Schmidt of Freeman, South Dakota, which he accepted. He took over the pastorate of the church in September, 1920. During his ministry here the Intermediate Christian Endeavor Society was organized. He resigned in 1922.

A call was then extended to Menno J. Galle of Odessa, Washington, who accepted. He took over the pastorate in 1922. During intervals when the church had no pastor, or the pastor was absent, Henry Toevs served in the pulpit.

M. J. Galle and wife were faithful workers and many members were added to the church during their ministry. The Christian Endeavor Organizations were strengthened and during this time, in 1925, the Young People's Christian Endeavor Society was organized. Also during these years a young people's choir was organized and served with special music. It was with sincere regret that the congre-



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Nelson P. Springer

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gation accepted the resignation of M. J. Galle in September, 1928. The next year John E. Kaufman accepted the pastorate.

The Immanuel Mennonite Church had many years before lost their elder, Leonard Dirks, through death, thus letting the entire burden of the work fall upon John Toeys, who was now failing in health. Some of the members of that church had left their dry farms and had moved closer to Aberdeen, and some had gone elsewhere. The First Mennonite Church extended an invitation to the Immanuel Mennonite Church to come and join her fellowship, which invitation was accepted by a large group in November, 1929. Later others followed until nearly all who remained near Aberdeen joined the First Mennonite Church. John Toeys often assisted J. E. Kaufman in the work of the church until death called Brother Toeys to his eternal reward.

After six and one-half years of service J. E. Kaufman vacated his position early in 1936.

After much prayer and with continued prayer the First Mennonite Church extended a call to Philip A. Wedel. The call was accepted and he came to take charge of the work. With renewed enthusiasm and spirit the work of the church went forward. The church had long felt the need of a larger place for worship but because of the years of financial depression, had been unable to carry out plans for enlarging the meetinghouse. It had been decided before to make a thirty-six by seventy foot addition and in November, 1937, the building of that addition was begun and it was completed the next spring and dedicated in June, 1938. This addition provided a larger auditorium, as well as additional Sunday-school rooms. In the spring of 1943 new pews were added to the church auditorium.

During these years the church choir, men's chorus, and men's quartet broadcast many sacred programs over radio station KSEI at Pocatello, Idaho. The Young People's Christian Endeavor Society has held weekly meetings during the summer months at the Mexican Labor Camp for the last five years. This society has also held annual young people's retreats for the last seven years.

In 1944 Philip A. Wedel resigned his pastorate here to accept the pastorate of the Alexanderwohl Church at Goessel, Kansas.

A call was sent to Henry N. Harder at Deer Creek, Oklahoma, who accepted the call and came in July, 1945, to take over the duties as pastor. He is still serving in that capacity.

From her membership have gone forth eight missionaries, three ministers, not including the missionaries, and other Christian workers. She has been a definite Christian asset to the community.

#### *The Caldwell Mennonite Church*

At Caldwell, Idaho, a second group of General Conference Mennonites of North America organized into a church on May 25, 1947. The first families of this group

came to that community in 1937 and others have been coming in since. In the spring of 1944 they first met for Sunday school and for church worship services whenever a minister could be supplied. There were about ten families including about forty men, women, and children. There are in the present organized group about twenty-five active members, and a Sunday school enrollment between fifty and sixty.

They have a meetinghouse which will comfortably seat about one hundred people in the main auditorium. This building is located in the city of Caldwell. They purchased the church building and moved it onto the basement foundation which they made. They began worshipping in this new building in 1947. Previously they worshiped in an abandoned schoolhouse which is nine miles from Caldwell.

#### *The Bonners Ferry Church of God in Christ Mennonite*

Another branch of Mennonites is represented in Idaho, the Church of God in Christ Mennonite at Bonners Ferry, but no response came in answer to requests for information. Bihar, India

#### WESTWARD HO—1884

(Continued from page 1)

but he settled young Jacob at Olathe.<sup>4</sup> By March 11, 1884, Abraham L. Hess, after whom Hesston is named, a son of Pre. John R. Hess and Annie Stauffer of Hammer Creek, settled at Hesston Station. David and Anna Weaver were there earlier. But now more caught the western fever.

On March 17, 1884, "thirty or forty farmers and their families will start from Dillsburg for Kansas. They are all thrifty, well to do farmers, some from the upper end of York County, and several from Adams County. They are all good citizens and among our best farmers, and will be an acquisition to the neighborhood they settle in. Most of them will locate in the vicinity of Abilene, Dickinson County."<sup>5</sup>

On April 19 *The Mount Joy Herald* carried this notice: "Persons intending to visit Kansas will find it to their interest to correspond with or see Jacob K. Nissley or Jacob B. Erb of Florin or Eli Nissley of Mount Joy, a committee for the excursion to start on May 5th to go as far as Abilene, Kansas, and return. The rates will be reasonable."<sup>6</sup>

On scheduled time (of course, Eastern sun time) at 10:8 the Pennsylvania train left Elizabethtown with a carload of mostly Lancaster Conference Mennonites, Kansas-bound for a season. Three church leaders headed the group, Bishop Christian Bomberger II (1818-1898) of Hammer Creek, his son-in-law, Pre. Henry E. Longenecker (1853-1928) of the Chestnut Hill-Landisville District, and Ephraim N. Nissley (1841-1907) of Kraybill's in the Donegal.

The first stop was Leavenworth, and then Abilene where they met friends and

relatives among the River Brethren who settled here in the five years prior. From Dickinson County they started from the Eli Hoffman farm in eleven teams for Peabody, fifty-five miles south, and other parts of central Kansas.

Ephraim N. Nissley reported the trip as follows: "The trip was a very pleasant one and was very much enjoyed by all; the roads being in good order and the weather could not have been pleasanter; hardly a cloud could be seen. We passed through a perfect sea of land; the prairie and grass fields all clothed in their green robe made the sight a grand one. As we came on south, we passed through the grazing country. One field we passed over contained 35,000 acres, with a large herd of cattle on it." After six hours they arrived at "the Crane Ranch on the Cottonwood RIVER, a stream as large as the RUN at Zook's Factory in East Donegal. This ranch had 5,240 acres and has shedding for 1,200 cattle and a few horses, and is well enclosed by a good board and wire fence."

A sample of the hospitality accorded them, at least fifty, after they left Abilene, is described thus: "Mr. W. E. Fanson, Treasurer of the Kansas Land Colonization and Emigration Company, was evidently not willing that his visitors should go away empty, for he furnished them with 60 loaves of bread, 30 pounds of crackers, 2 hams, 15 pounds of steak, 13 pounds of butter, 10 pounds of coffee, 30 dozen of eggs, with cups, plates, and a gasoline stove. . . Mrs. Eli Nissley, Mrs. Harry Hoffman, and Mrs. Levi Longenecker officiated as cooks. No doubt this party of weary travelers did justice to such an abundant three o'clock dinner, served in true Lancaster County style, though it was prepared in a corn crib and spread upon boards laid on the heads of barrels."<sup>9</sup>

Below is the list of those comprising the party, in addition to the above preachers, as nearly accurate as it can now be ascertained. Many of them were near relatives of either Samuel S. Garber (born July 4, 1840), a cousin of Benjamin, Sr., of Donegal Springs, or of his wife, Barbara S. Nissley (1843-1903), a daughter of Deacon John and Barbara Snyder Nissley of Kraybill, now (since 1880) of Holton, Jackson County, Kansas.<sup>10</sup>

- (4) Christian S. Nissley (1836-1900), a brother of Mrs. Sam Garber, and his wife, Mary Eby,<sup>11</sup> a sister of Mrs. Ephraim N. Nissley (I)
- (6) Lemon L. Beck (b. 1854) of Manheim, uncle of the Lititz and Manheim undertakers. He bought a farm on this trip near Peabody, claiming it in '85, where his son Lester now farms. He served at the Catlin Church, Peabody, as deacon from 1895 to the present. His wife was a daughter of John G. Graybill of Cross Roads, Richfield, Pennsylvania. His mother-in-law, Mrs. Graybill, accompanied him on this trip.
- (8) Jacob Erb,<sup>12</sup> son of Jacob and Mary



Bucher Erb of Kraybill's, and his wife, Leah, and Henry Miller, her brother, children of David L. and Anna Longenecker Miller of Bossler's. Jacob, the father of T. M. Erb, went to Newton, Kansas, with family in '85 and became deacon of the Pennsylvania Church between Hesston and Newton. Henry's son, Benjamin Miller, still lives in Hesston, the father of Mrs. J. N. Byler of Akron, Pennsylvania;

- (11) Christian K. Hostetter of Donegal,<sup>13</sup> whose wife, Fannie S. Nissley, was a niece of Mrs. Sam Garber;
- (12) Jonas E. Hostetter of Florin, father of Tillman, whose wife was Barbara K. Nissley, a cousin of Mrs. Garber;
- (13) Gabriel Rutt, son of Bishop Martin Rutt, and wife, Amanda Nissley, of Mount Joy;
- (15) Joseph H. Habecker, brother of Rohrerstown's Christian, of Mount Joy, and wife, Mary Hostetter, who was a daughter of Jonas E. of Mount Joy, whom he married in 1883. His first wife, Tillie, was a sister of Mrs. Sam Garber;
- (17) Jacob Hollinger of Mastersonville and Henry B. Gish of Conoy;
- (19) Eli N. Nissley, a brother of Pre. Ephraim, and wife, Rebecca Eby, sister of Ephraim's first wife, of Donegal;
- (21) Abram Herr and wife, Anna Reider, son of George R. Herr of Donegal<sup>14</sup> and later of Dickinson County, Kansas, the parents of Attorney Isaac R. Herr of Lancaster.
- (23) Aaron L. Engle, married to Sarah Reider, of Mount Joy;
- (24) John R. Herr, and wife, Mary Heisey, later a River Brethren minister of Enterprise, Dickinson County;
- (26) Levi G. Longenecker<sup>15</sup> and wife, nee Bender, who had a brother, John N., at Topeka and later Newton, also of Bossler's, West Donegal;
- (28) William Parthemore, the father of Mrs. John E. Gish, Abilene, and probably five more, including Elias Nissley of Mount Joy, and Harry Hoffman and wife. With them for at least part of the trip were David Rutt and wife, Elizabeth Nissley, of Sterling, Illinois, a cousin of Bishop Martin Rutt and grandparents of the Nunemaker girls of Elizabethtown; Pre. Jacob Engle, John Forney, John N. Graybill (who had been reported killed earlier), John Stauffer, Eli Hoffman, C. S. Hoffman, Henry Musser, Jacob Hamaker, and Cyrus Lenhart, most of whom were from the Donegal but now of Dickinson, Kansas; John H. Brenner of Canton, Ohio, originally west of Florin, an uncle of Mrs. Levi K. Nissley, and a Gerber of Virginia.

"We started to visit," Bro. Nissley con-

tinues, "the eastern part of the ranch, which was the most interesting to me. We first visited the main mansion which was surrounded by a thickly set grove consisting of maple, cottonwood, and very fine apple and cherry trees. Onward we passed over pasture and grain fields 640 acres in one field."<sup>16</sup>

After the above dinner, "We took a trip south, taking the Santa Fe Railroad at Hillsboro, a very thriving town, which seems to be principally settled by Germans. Here I saw the greatest display of implements since we left home."<sup>17</sup>

On the trip they attended preparatory services at Spring Valley, and meetings in Dickinson County, in a schoolhouse near by the Cottonwood Ranch, and in a schoolhouse near Bishop Daniel Wismer's who came from Waterloo County, Ontario, but since 1875 was in Marion County, Kansas. They made other contacts, such as the one with Christian Brubakers of Hammer Creek, Pennsylvania, who in 1877 came to McPherson County with \$8,000, and now had 1,200 acres of well developed land.<sup>18</sup>

So well were some of them pleased that in March, 1885, on one train L. L. and Kate (Graybill) Beck, Jacob and Leah (Miller) Erb, John<sup>19</sup> and Fianna (Garber) Erb, Henry and Amanda (Herr) Gish, and Frank and Margaret (Hoover) Horst and their families sailed for the broad acres of Kansas.<sup>20</sup>

Some of these were charter members of a church, with so many from eastern Pennsylvania that they named it the Pennsylvania Church. Others were pioneers at Peabody and at other Mennonite congregations of Kansas. Daniel Metzler, like a few others, could not be satisfied with Kansas and so returned to Erisman's to serve as deacon. Others such as Benjamin Musser lost their lives in the attempt to establish themselves on the frontier.<sup>21</sup> Some, as the above John Erbs, returned to Pennsylvania for the remainder of their days.

#### Footnotes:

<sup>1</sup> Hartzler and Kauffman, *Mennonite Church History*, p. 300. *Mennonite Historical Bulletin*, December, 1945.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. C. Henry Smith, *The Story of the Mennonites*, p. 643, and present articles on the 75th Anniversary.

<sup>3</sup> H. N. Nissley, Mt Joy genealogist.

<sup>4</sup> Jacob Hershey, verbally given.

<sup>5</sup> *The York Weekly*, copied by *The Mount Joy Herald*, March 5, 1884.

<sup>6</sup> *The Mount Joy Herald*, April 19, 1884.

<sup>7</sup> Mrs. Henry Longenecker, daughter of Bishop Christian Bomberger, at this writing is still fairly robust at 99 (Jan. '50).

<sup>8</sup> Father of Pre. Joseph Nissley, Altoona, and Mrs. Christian Brubaker, Erisman.

<sup>9</sup> *Herald of Truth*, June 1, 1884, p. 169; *The Mount Joy Herald*, May 10, 1884.

<sup>10</sup> Samuel S. Garber's children are as follows: Ezra, Lizzie, Fannie, Sadie, Ira, Harry, Mary, and John. *Brubaker Genealogy* by Jacob N. Brubacher.

<sup>11</sup> Parents of Reuben Nissley and Mrs. Eli G. Reist, Mount Joy.

<sup>12</sup> Jacob was an uncle to the late Abram Erb, Sr., East Petersburg; grandfather of Allen, La Junta, Colorado, and Paul of

Scottdale, Pennsylvania; great-grandfather of Sanford King, Hutchinson, Kansas, and Donald E. King of Elkton, Michigan.

<sup>13</sup> Father of Mrs. Amos H. Hershey Manheim, and grandfather of Mrs. George J. Lapp, Goshen, Indiana.

<sup>14</sup> George R. Herr, b. 1849, and Martha L. Engle, b. 1851, Brethren in 1885 moved to Hope, Kansas. *History of the Engle Family in America* by Morris M. Engle, p. 89.

<sup>15</sup> Father of Elam Longenecker, Erisman's.

<sup>16,18</sup> Same as 9.

<sup>19</sup> Brother of Deacon Harry Erb, Bossler's, and Mrs. Daniel Metzler, Erisman.

<sup>20</sup> Letter from Helen Horst of Peabody, granddaughter of L. L. Beck. *Mennonite Historical Bulletin* (above).

<sup>21</sup> Benjamin E. Musser (1810-1884) was killed crossing a ravine, September 23, near Herington, Kansas, after purchasing 650 acres. Body was returned to Cross Roads Brethren in Christ cemetery, Mount Joy. See *Engle*, p. 24.

Lititz, Pa.

#### MENNONITE PERIODICALS

(Continued from page 1)

second number of the sixteenth volume, published January 11, 1883; so it must have begun in 1868. The Library also has a copy dated March 22, 1888. The greater part of the news items were in German with occasional articles in English. About one third of the advertisements were in English.

*Der Waffenlose Wächter*, or *Weaponless Watchman*, first appeared as the *Acorn and Germ* in 1870—a trilingual magazine in English, German, and Pennsylvania Dutch. Later the Pennsylvania Dutch section was discontinued. The magazine contained inspirational articles, news items, and advertisements. It was published at least as late as 1881.

Not quite as early as these three magazines is *The Weekly Echo*, first published in 1902, with the slogan: "The object of this paper will not be reached until it is considered an absolute necessity in every Mennonite family." The May 22, 1902, issue definitely stated that it did not hope to supplant the *Herald of Truth*, but that it wished to supplement that more general organ with one devoted more exclusively to the Mennonites of eastern Pennsylvania. It carried a weekly calendar of Mennonite meetings in that area, personal news items, and articles of Mennonite history, but much of its space was given to articles on nonreligious, non-Mennonite subjects.

The Mennonite Historical Library would like to add to its file of scattered numbers of these and other early Mennonite periodicals. To this end I solicit the help of the readers of the Mennonite Historical Bulletin in locating and securing copies of these papers. I would also be glad for additional information concerning the history of these papers, particularly the length of time they were published. Goshen, Indiana.



# MENNONITE HISTORICAL BULLETIN

Published quarterly by the Historical Committee of Mennonite General Conference at Scottdale, Pennsylvania, and distributed to the members of Mennonite Historical Association. **Editors:** John C. Wenger and Melvin Gingerich. **Associate Editors:** H. S. Bender, H. A. Brunk, J. C. Clemens, S. F. Coffman, Paul Erb, J. C. Fretz, Ira D. Landis, Millard C. Lind, C. Z. Mast, and S. S. Wenger. Dues for regular membership (one dollar per year) or for sustaining membership (five dollars or more annually) may be sent to the treasurer of the Association, Ira D. Landis, Route 3, Littitz, Pennsylvania. Articles and news items may be addressed to either editor at Goshen, Indiana. **Office Editor:** Paul Erb.

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No. 2

## John S. Coffman Pioneer Mennonite Evangelist

CLAYTON SWARTZENTRUBER

### I. The Boy

The great-grandfather of John S. Coffman emigrated from Germany to Pennsylvania near the close of the eighteenth century. The name of John's grandfather was Isaac Coffman. Isaac and his wife Esther were blessed with a large family. Soon they were much concerned in locating in a good place, which would provide places for their children to establish their homes.

Later Isaac and Esther Coffman moved to Rockingham County, Virginia. This location proved to be only temporary. In 1787 one could have seen them slowly picking their way over the Allegheny Mountains. It was a hard and tedious journey, but with motives of unselfishness and love for their children the journey was a joy.

They settled now in the region where only a year earlier the whoops of the savage had been heard. Their new location was in Greenbrier County, now in West Virginia.

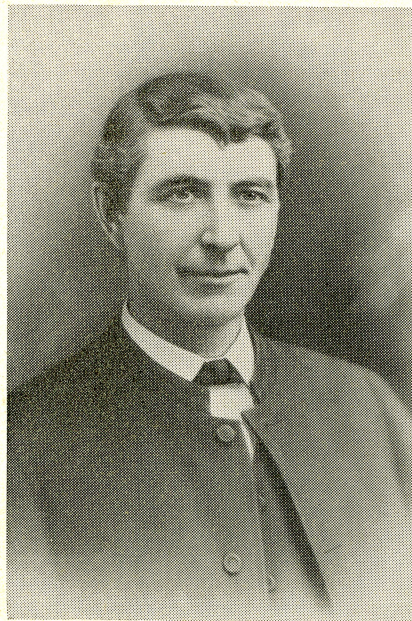
Christian, the third son of Isaac and Esther Coffman, married Anna Wenger of Rockingham County. To this union God granted ten children. The fourth child was Samuel, the father of John.

In the spring of 1847 Samuel went to Rockingham County to work. It was to his advantage when he made the acquaintance of a beautiful girl, Frances Weaver, whom he married in the fall of 1847.

In July, 1852, Samuel Coffman was ordained to the ministry. Nine years later he became bishop, and was responsible for the churches of the Central District of Virginia.

Samuel Coffman became known to many children as "Grandpa Coffman." He was kind and affectionate. In his official dealings he was considerate and impartial. However, he didn't lack backbone nor administrative punch. He was a leader in a very real way. These qualities and virtues of Samuel Coffman were beautifully ingrained in his noble son John.

It was in the fall of the year—all nature seemed to be dressed for the occasion—a mother had been much in prayer. Because of her consecration to the Lord it was a happy day, October 16, 1848, when she gave birth to her first child, John. The mother's feelings may be expressed in her own words:



John S. Coffman, 1848-99

Never again did I enjoy such a blessed feeling and have such a bright token at the birth of any of my children as I witnessed at this time, much as I longed for it.

Early John gave evidence to some sterling qualities. One day after his mother had related to him the crucifixion of Christ on the cross, she noticed that he was deeply impressed. He was crying bitterly. In answer to his mother's question he said, "I think they did Christ a great wrong. Those men must have been very wicked or they would not have treated Christ so shamefully." It was with deep emotion that John in later years referred to the crucifixion experience of Christ.

John certainly was a "mother's boy." He would often go to her for advice. At times it was nerve-racking to her because of the questions he would ask. It seemed that his young mind was full of questions. He was not a rough boy, but seemed to delight in playing games of a harmless nature.

Educational facilities were unknown. In fact, before the Civil War there were no free schools in Virginia. It was a day when education was superfluous. The knowledge that a person gained above what he actually needed to transact business was considered useless. And to pursue a higher degree of learning was thought of as a waste of time.

(Continued on page 3)

## The Mennonites Establishing Themselves in Pennsylvania

JOHN C. WENGER

### 1. Immigration

Stray Dutch Mennonite traders were in New Amsterdam, now New York, as early as 1644. And in 1663 a Dutchman named Cornelius Plockhoy established a colony on a stream called the Horekill which flows into Delaware Bay. A number of Mennonites were included in the Plockhoy Colony. The colony had a short life, being destroyed by the English a year or two after its founding. It was not until 1683 that a permanent colony of Quakers and Mennonites was founded several miles from Philadelphia. Since it was settled by immigrants from Crefeld, Germany, it got the name Germantown attached to it. "I have many chickens and geese, and a garden," wrote one settler to a friend in Europe some time after his arrival in 1684, "and shall next year have an orchard if I am well, so that my wife and I are in good spirits, and are reaching a condition of ease and prosperity. . . ." The settlers of 1683 all came from Crefeld, Germany; they were followed in turn by Mennonites from the Lower Rhine; from Hamburg-Altona; from the Palatinate; and from the Netherlands: a total of about forty Mennonite families having settled in Germantown between 1683 and 1708.

In the year 1709 Mennonite immigration to North America began in real earnest. The immigrants of the following decades were not Dutch but Palatines. William Penn, founder of Pennsylvania, wrote to his secretary in Pennsylvania, James Logan: "Herewith comes the Palatines, whom use with tenderness and love, and fix them so that they may send over an agreeable character; for they are sober people, divers Mennonites, and will neither swear nor fight. See that Guy has used them well." (Guy was their ship captain.)

### 2. Settlements

The first outpost of the Germantown settlement was about twenty miles to the northwest, a place in what is now Montgomery County called Skippack. Some Germantown Mennonites settled at Skippack as early as 1702. The Palatine Mennonite immigrants of 1709 and the following years passed by the town of Germantown and pressed on to the Skippack rural area. Other settlements were made in rapid succession: the Schuylkill Valley and the Manatawny section (now Chester,



Montgomery, and Berks counties, Pennsylvania); other sections of Montgomery County, and in Bucks and Lehigh counties. The oldest congregations of the Franconia Conference settlements were Skippack, Coventry, Hereford, Swamp, and Deep Run. In the eighteenth century the Franconia Conference had churches all over the southeastern counties of Pennsylvania: Philadelphia, Montgomery, Chester, Bucks, Berks, Lehigh, and Northampton. The bulk of the settlers were not Dutch, but Swiss by ethnic origin, most of them coming, however, not from Switzerland directly, but from the Palatinate.

The most prosperous settlement in Pennsylvania was not that which radiated outward from the counties just mentioned, however. This distinction belongs to the Pequea and Conestoga settlements which in time developed into the great Lancaster Mennonite Conference. It was in 1710 that the original Pequea settlement was made in the general area of the village of Willow Street. What is now Lancaster County was then a part of Chester. (The town of Lancaster was at first known as Hickory Town.) The Conestoga settlement was made in 1717. In the following decades a strong immigration of Swiss (Palatine) Mennonites swelled the original settlements and formed new ones. The Hickory Town area became the most powerful Mennonite colony in Pennsylvania, in Colonial America, and even today is stronger than any other Mennonite conference east of the Mississippi.

The family names of Franconia and Lancaster are almost completely separate: in Franconia we find such names as Alderfer, Allebach, Biehn, Bechtel, Beidler, Bergey, Cassel, Clemens, Clemmer, Derstine, Detweiler, Fried, Funk, Gehman, Geisinger, Godshalk, Gross, Halde-man, Hiestand, Hoch, Hunsberger, Hunsicker, Jansen (Johnson now), Kolb, Landis, Lapp, Leatherman, Lederach, Mack, Meyer-Moyer, Nice, Oberholtzer, Overholt, Pannebecker, Reiff, Rickert, Rittenhouse, Rosenberger, Rush, Ruth, Shelly, Souder, Stauffer, Stover, Swartley, Tyson, Walter, Weber, Wismer, Yoder, Yothers, Young, and Ziegler. In Lancaster one finds such names as Auker, Baer, Boll, Bomberger, Bowman, Boyer, Brackbill, Brenneman, Brubacher, Bucher, Buckwalter, Burkhart, Burkholder, Charles, Danner, Denlinger, Doner, Eberley, Ebersole, Eby, Erb, Eshleman, Forrey, Frantz, Gehman, Geigley, Gingrich, Good, Graybill, Greider, Groff, Habacker, Harnish, Hernley, Herr, Hershey, Hess, Horning, Hoover, Horst, Hostetter, Kauffman, Keener, Kendig, Greider-Kreider, Kurtz, Landis, Lauver, Leaman, Lehman, Lefever, Longenecker, Lutz, Martin, Mellinger, Metzler, Miller, Mosemann, Musser, Myers, Newcomer, Newswanger, Nissley, Nolt, Oberholtzer, Ranck, Ressler, Reist, Risser, Rohrer, Roth, Rupp, Rutt, Sauder, Seitz, Senger, Sensenig, Shank, Shenk, Shertzer, Shirk, Shope, Sieber, Snively, Stauffer, Stoner, Strickler, Weber-Weaver, Weiney,

Wenger, Wert, Witmer, Zeiset, and Zimmerman.

### 3. Daily Life

In Colonial America life centered about the home and the church. Little else concerned the settlers. Their first task was to clear the forests, build themselves homes, and erect a dual-purpose building for church and school. The women manufactured soap from fat, lye, and rain water. Rye or whole-wheat bread was also homemade. They spun flax and made clothing for the entire family. They also made butter, cheese, and apple butter at home. Wine and whisky were considered essential for tonics, for medicine, and for moderate social drinking. The use of tobacco was also common. Prior to 1825 the usual mode of travel was riding horses. The men were compelled to do all their farm work by hand; there was much backbreaking work and no labor-saving inventions.

The clothing of the pioneers would appear quaint today: The men wore buckle shoes, knee breeches, frock coats without lapels, and high silk or beaver hats. The women wore plain headdress, a long and full plain dress, and large cloaks. About the time of the Revolutionary War long trousers began to be worn by the men. In summertime the men went barefoot a great deal, even to the "meeting" (religious service). The big social events were marriages and funerals when the whole community came together. The language of the pioneers was Palatine German to which in the course of time considerable English was added, producing the famous "Pennsylvania Dutch." *Aver die Leit saage zu viel iver die Sprooch, un' viel saage meh' d's sie wisse.* (People talk about the language too much, and many say more than they know.)

### 4. The Church

The church life of the pioneers was simple, dignified, sincere, and satisfying. The Mennonites had not yet become American activists. Services were usually held about every two weeks on a Sunday morning, with no exact time stipulated for the beginning of the meeting. Choristers led the congregation in singing one-part German hymns. The deacon read a chapter from the German (Saur, Germantown) Bible, remaining seated to read. The congregation knelt in silent prayer. Then the minister preached a sermon, about an hour in length. After the sermon the other ordained men gave "testimony" that the sermon was in harmony with the Word of God. The final prayer was an audible petition which was always completed with the Lord's Prayer. After another hymn the benediction was pronounced, over a seated audience in the Franconia Conference.

In the Franconia district communion services were held annually in the spring; in Lancaster in spring and fall. In the Lancaster district feet washing was practiced as a church ordinance in connection with the communion service, but not in Franconia as a whole. Fast days were

occasionally observed. In the autumn, after the ingathering of crops, "Harvest Home" services were held to express thanksgiving to the Lord of Harvests.

Bishops (elders), ministers, and deacons did not choose their own offices. When there was need of a given official in a congregation votes were cast and when two or more brethren received votes—the usual experience—lots were cast in a solemn service to determine who was called of the Lord. The individual immediately assumed his responsibilities with the loyal support and earnest prayers of his former fellow laymen.

### 5. Economic and Social Life

The communities of the first century were self-contained German communities, the major non-Mennonite contacts being confined to their Reformed and Lutheran neighbors, also Pennsylvania Germans. Family life was strong, divorce was unknown, families were large, often as many as ten or more children. Everyone worked hard, idleness being considered a sin and recreation never heard of. It was taken for granted that everyone would either farm or work for another farmer. Marriage with "outsiders" was rather rare. In general boys and girls grew up on the parental homesteads, attended the elementary school maintained by the Mennonite community, worked for their parents until they were married, and then settled down on a near-by farm which the parents of one or the other marriage partner helped them rent or purchase. Money was often scarce but there was always plenty to eat and wear, and much work to be done. The pioneers were happy, busy, and satisfied. They were a healthy lot of people. Their faith satisfied all their needs. They knew there was a kind and beneficent Father in heaven who had guided them across the Atlantic to the earthly Paradise of Pennsylvania. Where a tragedy occurred, perhaps a horse kicked a man fatally, the relatives of the widow sustained her economically, and if necessary the church through its deacons helped, until the children were old enough to assume the financial burdens of their mother.

### 6. Situation Spiritually

The Pennsylvania Mennonites were quite different in some respects from their Swiss Brethren forefathers of the era 1525-30. Their Christianity was not that of "radical" Christians; it had settled down to a comfortable, conventional, denominational type. There was no thought of evangelistic work, no need of any kind of mission work, no occasion to alter any of the set patterns of worship. The faith and practice of the immigrants was good and satisfying; why change? From 1683 until the ordination of John H. Oberholtzer almost 160 years later no great changes were made, and no one intended to make any. The Bible had not changed; why should anyone introduce any innovations? Only with great effort would it be possible to introduce Sunday schools, evangelistic services, Bible study



and prayer meetings, evening services, church boards of charities, publication, education, and missions. This was the situation 160 years after the thirty-five Crefelders arrived at Philadelphia on the good ship *Concord* October 6, 1683.

—Printed originally in part in *Mennonite Life*, North Newton, Kansas.

# JOHN S. COFFMAN

(Continued from page 1)

David A. Heatwole, father of L. J. Heatwole, was largely responsible for giving the young people in his day the desire for an education. He not only gave them the desire, but also assisted them in many ways. He opened a night school for the boys of the neighborhood, where he taught them the common subjects. With the boys under his direct influence he was able to impress upon them the necessity and assets of an education. John Coffman, along with other boys, took advantage of this opportunity. The progress of the boys gave David Heatwole the needed stimulus and he directed his energies into more extensive channels.

The need for a school building became evident. Several of the brethren donated money to David Heatwole for the purpose of building a schoolhouse. This gave the man much courage and the building was soon completed.

John was talented in many ways. As a young man he took much interest in singing. Mrs. Samuel Burkholder said of him, "John was never a wild boy; he was more quiet." Even while going to school, instead of getting into mischief, he delighted in getting some boys together and singing. It was also said of him that he would usually try to have a singing some place on Sunday afternoon. These singings were held in the schoolhouse, and sometimes in John's home, or one of his friends'. He was the natural leader of the group and he usually led the singing.

In order to shed another ray of light upon his character, notice what Peter S. Hartman says of him.

I have been with Brother Coffman from twelve years of age to the time he left Virginia more than with any other man, and I can say honestly I have seen less foolishness in him and more practical common sense than in anyone I was ever with in all my life.

It is with a sense of deep gratitude and admiration that we reflect on his conversion experience. It was a warm, balmy evening early in the summer while he was out in the orchard when conviction set its firm grasp upon him. Here is what he said of this experience:

For the first time I felt that I was a sinner, lost and without hope in the world. I was so burdened that I cast myself under the tree and prayed to my God for help and to the Lord for salvation until He answered me.

John was sixteen at this time. Several weeks later he was baptized in Muddy Creek, near the Bank Church.

In this period of John's life there were dark clouds hanging over the nation. There was political unrest. The race problem was rising to a peak. Already one could hear the roar of war. Brother was fighting against brother, father against son, and friend against friend. There are many sad and pathetic stories unreel from this period. There is no doubt that these years had a weakening effect upon the United States. Now our Mennonite fathers were not free from the effects of those warring years.

During John's manhood General Sheridan swept down through the beautiful Shenandoah devastating things as he went. It was the Shenandoah Valley, the garden of the South, that furnished the southern army with more grain, provisions, and horses than any other section of the country.

General Grant ordered General Sheridan to raid the valley and destroy buildings, burn the barns, and take the grain. They took many of the horses and hogs; and what they were not able to take with them they destroyed or killed so that those things would not be at the disposal of the Confederate Army. Matters in the valley were becoming tense. It was finally decided that some of the young men would go to Harrisonburg and apply to the Union Army as refugees.

One of John's best friends, Peter Hartman, was in this group along with some other boys. They made their appearance before General Sheridan, who had a very stern countenance. One of the fellows later commented on the jolt he received when he first was brought before him. The general inquired of a guard concerning the business of the boys. He was informed that they wished to join his company as refugees and travel north with him. This way the boys would avoid the possibility of being drafted into the Confederate Army against their wishes. Immediately after the general was informed of the boys' intent his expression changed. Soon a broad smile crossed his hardened face and he manifested a good spirit, and told the boys he would be very happy to have them in his company. Furthermore he told them that if any of his men had taken any of their horses, and they could identify them, it would be all right for the boys to ride them north. Peter Hartman recognized one of his father's horses; so he took it, and received permission to go home and get a saddle. The next day the company, and it was a huge military affair, was off for the north.

Peter Hartman was riding his horse. The other fellows, and John, were with the company's men, and rode with them. General Sheridan moved north as far as Martinsburg. There the company was called to a halt. The boys were eager to get across the Potomac, and out of the Confederates' territory. They secured

passage on a stagecoach from Martinsburg north across the Potomac. Peter decided to take his horse along; so he followed the stage. The stagecoach driver informed Peter that the Potomac was difficult to ford, but that if he, Peter, would stay with the coach all would be well. With this arrangement the fellows left Sheridan's company. When they were just several miles from the Potomac several Union soldiers were riding by, and seeing that Peter's horse was branded "U. S." demanded that he stop. General Sheridan had branded all the horses in this way for identification. The Union soldier accused Peter of stealing the Union's horse. Fortunately General Sheridan had given Peter a pass for both himself and the horse. After some discussion the soldiers consented to let Peter go. Dismay seized Peter as he rode hard ahead. The encounter with the soldiers had taken some time, and the stagecoach with John Coffman in it, was far out of sight. Would he be able to catch it before they crossed the Potomac? He rode as hard as the steed would go. For several miles he kept his keen eye on the watch. He knew he was close to the river, but the stagecoach had not yet been seen. Furiously he spurred down through the valley, then up a small knoll; there before him was the Potomac, and the stagecoach was just starting to ford it. Quickly he joined his comrades.

John Coffman, Peter Hartman, and the other fellows worked in the vicinity of Hagerstown until the war closed. John also worked in Cumberland County, Pennsylvania. Before returning to Virginia it was their privilege to observe the funeral procession of Abraham Lincoln in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. The war was over, as far as Virginia was concerned, on April 9, 1865. The boys prepared to go back home. The boys returned home by stagecoach.

As John was walking in the lane, his sister Mary saw him. The signal given, all rushed out to meet him. There was truly a happy meeting among deplorable surroundings. Many barns were destroyed, cribs were empty, and houses needed repairs. John was the man for the hour. A few days later he and some other energetic boys of the community formed a carpenter's gang and went to work. There was much work to be done, and here were the men to do it.

One can easily imagine the discouragement that some of these people had to experience. Those war years were terrible ones. Some of them lost nearly everything they had. It was with this state of affairs that John and the boys worked. In the evening they would go and visit some depressed family. They sang songs of hope and sunshine.

Already John was living for others. "Living for Jesus, a life that is true; trying to please Him in all that I do." Certainly a life of unselfishness is a great one.

(To be concluded in July issue)



## Book Reviews

Robert Friedmann: *Mennonite Piety Through the Centuries. Its Genius and Its Literature*. The Mennonite Historical Society, Goshen College, Goshen, Indiana, 1949; pp. xvi & 287. Studies in Anabaptist and Mennonite History, No. 7. \$3.50.

This book is a first attempt to portray the inner spiritual history of the Anabaptist-Mennonite movement from its beginnings to the modern period. It is the fruit of a unique lifetime of study and thought which began in the University of Vienna, continued in England, and was finally brought to this conclusion in the Mennonite Historical Library at Goshen College. The author confesses that the study is for him more than an interesting historical subject: "... It appears in my vision as one of the greatest manifestations of the Gospel-spirit in the world, the attempt to materialize, at least to a great extent, on this earth the truth of the Word of God."

The book is divided into two studies. Study I is a historical analysis of the relationship between Anabaptism and Pietism. Study II is a study of Mennonite devotional literature of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which illustrates an amplifies Study I.

The author points out that of the three main sectors of Anabaptism, the Holland and Northwest German sector moved toward rationalism. The Hutterian Brethren of Austria remained aloof from the world and were least affected by outside influences. It was the Swiss Anabaptists of Switzerland and South Germany who were most affected by the Pietistic movement. Therefore this book concentrates chiefly on the latter sector of the movement, and consequently is of great interest to the so-called "old" Mennonites, as it is mainly from this sector that we have come.

After the statement of the problem the book begins with the contrast between Anabaptism and Pietism. The emphasis of Anabaptism is literal obedience to the New Testament. The emphasis of Pietism is the inward emotional aspects of religion, inward peace and joy. While there was also the note of real joy and peace in Anabaptism, yet it was a by-product of strict obedience to Christ. Anabaptism emphasized the kingdom or rule of God. Pietism emphasized justification by faith.

The main thesis of the book is that because of the conflict with the world and the flesh which literal obedience to the New Testament demands, the Anabaptist tends to fall to the temptation to move toward Pietism, which accepts the world order as it is and makes peace with it. This temptation and movement is evidenced by the change in the type of Mennonite literature. While original Anabaptist literature centered upon obedience and suffering, from the seventeenth century much of the popular literature has moved

toward emotionalism, inward peace, "victory," etc.

The last chapter of the book is an interesting one which shows the position of the late John Horsch and the Goshen school to the present Anabaptist revival. The book should be read by all serious-minded leaders of the Mennonite Church. This reviewer's main question regarding the book is the distinction made between the teaching of Jesus and the Apostle Paul. The statement is made that Anabaptism emphasized the teaching of Jesus, the kingdom of God, while Pietism emphasized the teaching of Paul, justification by faith. Has it been historically verified that the Anabaptists cited more passages from the Gospels than from the Epistles? John Horsch points out, for instance, that the Anabaptists do not emphasize the Sermon on the Mount as some Anabaptist students suppose.

It seems to this reviewer that this is a basic misunderstanding of the message of the Apostle Paul. He did teach justification by faith; so did Jesus. (Note the many and bold references to Jesus' person, even in the "Sermon on the Mount.") But justification by faith in the case of both teachers was never the end but the means. The primary emphasis of the apostle was the same as that of Jesus, the kingdom or rule of God. The climax of all his epistles was love; not love in the abstract, but love as concretely expressed and manifested in social relationships, especially relationships within the brotherhood. This desired response to the rule of God could be attained only by faith. Thus Paul avoided both Pietism and moralistic rationalism of later centuries.

Although the true emphasis of the Apostle Paul is not congenial to Pietism, yet it seems to this reviewer that there was a tendency in the early church somewhat analogous to Pietism. It was a popular tendency in the early church to give Christianity an individualistic, emotional expression. For example, instead of the obedience of love expressed in concrete brotherhood, there was a division in the Corinthian Church between the rich and poor as manifested at the communion service. Life was not dedicated to the building up of the brotherhood, but various abilities were used selfishly. Christianity to these people was the emotional uplift of speaking in tongues, etc.

It was just this popular tendency which Paul fought continuously in his Corinthian, Ephesian, and other letters. The analogy of the later Pietistic emphasis was not that of some of the apostolic leaders; They were united on the one platform of loving obedience. The temptation of Anabaptism toward Pietism seems to this reviewer to have been one of the great temptations of the early church against which the true apostolic leaders and brotherhood had to struggle.

Mennonite Publishing House.

Millard C. Lind.

## Martyrs' Mirror Reprinted Again

J. C. WENGER

One of the greatest, if not the most significant, of all books ever written by Mennonites is the *Bloody Theater or Martyrs' Mirror* of T. J. van Braght, 1625-1664. The fifth English edition of this great tome has just come from the press. Like the fourth edition of 1938 this one was issued by Mennonite Publishing House, Scottdale, Pennsylvania. The cost of the volume is \$9.75. This is a book for every Sunday-school library and for every Mennonite home which is interested in preserving our nonresistant faith and our conception of the Christian life as discipleship.

The Old Order Amish congregations under the leadership of Levi D. Christner of Topeka, Indiana, are at present reprinting the German *Martyrs' Mirror* by the so-called offset method, essentially that of photographic reproductions of the book, page by page.

May these two reprint editions of the great Mennonite classic prove effective in acquainting Mennonite and Amish youth with the history and heritage of the brotherhood.

Goshen, Indiana.

## Sustaining Members

1949

The Mennonite Historical Bulletin is published by, and mailed to the members of, The Mennonite Historical Association. Those who pay an annual membership fee of five dollars or more become for that year sustaining members. Twenty members are entitled to that recognition for the past year. Here is the list, as furnished by the treasurer of the association, Ira D. Landis, Route 3, Lititz, Pennsylvania:

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# MENNONITE HISTORICAL BULLETIN

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## A Biography of Michael Sattler

MAXINE SCHROCK

Michael Sattler was born in the latter part of the fifteenth century, probably around 1495, in the German town of Staufen. Although he was only thirty-two at his death, he proved to be one of the most outstanding leaders of the early Swiss Brethren, and his short life is an inspiring example of staunch stewardship and sincere love of God.

As a young man it is supposed that he studied at the University of Freiburg in Breisgau, for he is spoken of as a well-educated man, thoroughly versed in the Holy Scriptures and capable of speaking several languages. Having dedicated his life to the service of the church, he entered St. Peter's Monastery at Freiburg and before long was elevated to a high position of responsibility and trust as "lord" of the monks. Later when he was being tried, a court clerk asked him why he had not remained a lord in the convent, and Michael answered, "According to the flesh, I was a lord; but it is better so." He spoke just these few words and these fearlessly.

Not being content to continue in his position in the monastery where he was disgusted with the worldliness of the monks and priests, he renounced his order and married a wife in 1525. In the same year, after associating himself with the Swiss Brethren in Zurich, he was banished as an Anabaptist.

Sattler submitted a statement of his views on doctrine and practice to Martin Butzer, the foremost reformer of Strasburg. At this time he was living in Alsace with Wolfgang Capito, the head of the Strasburg clergy and a loyal friend of Sattler. Butzer maintained that out of love the Anabaptists ought to unite with the state church even if they disagreed on Christian doctrine. The state clergy thought of the church as a people's church in which all infants were made secure in infancy by baptism; a church whose members practiced the necessary duties of earthly citizenship. Sattler and his fellow believers insisted that the church was composed only of those who were personally united to Christ in saving faith, and whose lives were lived in strict obedience to Christ—the sincere Christian being identified by his carrying out of Christ's teaching in everyday life. Sattler further maintained that the Christian's first duty is to Christ, not to earthly

(Continued on page 4)



Jacob A. Beutler at 21

Jacob A. Beutler was born near Richland, Ohio, December 20, 1833. As a youth he moved with his widowed mother to Elkhart County, Indiana. Jacob's father, John Beutler, came from Pabsbach, Germany. According to the *Herald of Truth* (1868, p. 57) Jacob was ordained to the ministry in that year, possibly on March 19. His congregation was Holde-man. On October 11, 1872, he was ordained to the office of bishop in the Yellow Creek Church. Daniel Kauffman writes in the *Mennonite Cyclopedic Dictionary*: "He lived and served through the strenuous days when the Brenneman and Wisler factions withdrew from the church. By the grace of God Bro. Beutler stood firm for the Word and for his Church. To fill his appointments he often walked distances of five to seven miles and back again. While his years of active service were not so many, yet they meant much to the church in this community." Among his children are Magdalena, Mrs. S. C. Hartzler of Wakarusa, Indiana, and Martha, Mrs. Fred W. Bixler of Elkhart, Route 4, Indiana. Bishop Beutler died November 3, 1886, and is buried in the Olive Cemetery, Route 4, Elkhart, Indiana.

## John S. Coffman Pioneer Mennonite Evangelist

CLAYTON SWARTZENTRUBER

(Concluded from April issue)

### II. The Teacher

It was at this time that John directed his thoughts toward teaching. He was a likable fellow. Everyone appreciated his quiet ways and thoughtfulness. He was a natural teacher.

John had read books which he borrowed from Professor Bucher of Bridgewater; and he had attended school some. But for the most part he was self-educated. He taught the district school before he was nineteen. In fact, when John returned home after the war he was in his tender sixteenth year.

As a teacher John was well liked. He rose in prominence among educational circles. He was foremost in competency and zeal.

In the schoolroom he was able to exert his influence in a much larger way. He kept on singing. In fact, he assisted in teaching music in the community, and later the responsibility fell on him entirely.

John took an active part in teachers' institutes, in literary exercises, in test examinations, and it was said of him that he won the reputation of being the liveliest teacher in the community. At the close of one of his schools he said:

Today (March 29, 1878) my school closed at Paul Summit. This is the second term for me at this place. We had some exercises at the close. A number of recitations and several dialogues interspersed with singing. The pupils decorated the house with cedars and mottoes, and we put a low stage across the end for the pupils to stand on while they sang. The closing was impressive. The pupils all had some sentiment when they recited with such feeling that it became affecting. The nicest sight we had was a recitation by the Baumshire twin brothers. There were about as many persons present as we could accommodate. I felt sad to part with my pupils as much as I ever did. They all manifested affection.

While John taught school he worked for Mrs. Samuel Burkholder's father. He would teach about three months of the year, then the rest of the time he worked on the farm. Mrs. Burkholder was then a young girl at home when John was rooming there and teaching school,



She gave her testimony to the fact that John was well liked as a teacher. She also informed the writer that John would gather a whole schoolhouse full of young people together and sing. Sometimes they would sing from the *Harmonia Sacra*.

Mrs. Burkholder related an interesting story concerning John, when he was teaching. John had bought a farm and was anxious to move on it and farm. So at school he would often share his expectations with the pupils. He talked about his farm quite frequently. He always had some good word to say about the farm. He enjoyed telling of all the things he was going to do when he farmed it. Now the school children enjoyed this too. One of them, Rebecca Rhodes, decided to have a little fun about John and his farm. So she wrote a letter, wording it as though she were writing to one of her girl friends in a neighboring state. In this letter she told about her teacher, John Coffman, and about his great farm. Along with other items of interest she wrote, "... John Coffman is going to raise potatoes as big as an alligator." After sealing the letter she calmly dropped it by the path where her teacher would see it the next morning on his way to school. The next day John found the letter on his way to school, and it is said that that day was a jolly day for both teacher and pupils.

It was providential that John Coffman and Elizabeth Heatwole were united in marriage in 1869. Sister Coffman shared the joys and sorrows of her husband. She stood by him. Because he was often away it was necessary for her to take more responsibility in the home. This she did well. The influence of this marriage is still giving its stimulus to us today.

### III. The Minister

It was in the spring of 1875 that the churches of the valley saw the need for a minister. There was some deliberation but it was finally decided that they cast votes, and ordain by lot. Now there were some who thought of active, aggressive, and qualified young men for the position. Others thought of older, more conservative men, who came up to their ideals in other particulars.

On July 18, 1875, God made it plain that John S. Coffman was the one who should preach the living Word. He was to preach to a people who were living and yet dying. The stars of the great spiritual awakening were beginning to appear. The moon of spiritual discernment was turning the hearts of men to their true lover, Jesus Christ. We are told that he had not felt much conviction up to this time, but that just before the lot was cast he received the token that he was the one chosen of God.

In many ways Brother Coffman climbed into the saddle of the ministry in a critical time. The road was a rough one. However, the girth of tradition was beginning to be loosened. As one looks back now, he can easily see how the Lord

was leading, and was calling a prophet suitable for the time. The old German proverb, "wie gelehrter, wie verkehrter" (the more learned, the more confused), had many advocates. Some of the churches of Virginia were saturated with this idea, making the work of Coffman more difficult.

His first sermon seemed to be well given. This evidently offended some. John Coffman believed in preparing his sermons in a good logical and systematic way. He studied and read much. He was given to prayer. All these factors coupled with the dynamic power of the Spirit made John Coffman the minister that he was.

John Coffman possessed a very important trait. He knew how to deal with people. It seems that he was able to be the friend of either party in the case of a schism. He was very careful, and avoided giving offense. On the other hand, he was firm in his convictions, and stood his ground when he knew that he was right. He was not stiff nor starchy; neither was he a jellyfish. Brother Coffman located himself between two extremes.

The people always liked to hear him preach. He had some spiritual food of which he fed them freely. He not only served gallons of milk, but tons of meat. A certain lad heard Brother Coffman preach, and when later inquiry was made concerning the preacher he made this comment, "John Coffman preached, and I want you to know he preached too."

John had natural talents. There are two basic reasons why his sermons were so effective. First, because of the message; second because of the message-bearer. John's life was an example of what he preached. He had a humble spirit, and possessed the gift of adaptability. John gave his sermons in the true spirit of the Gospel; then he lived them out in his own life, thus adding that extra punch that counts. It is true that John was aggressive, yet he sincerely regarded the feelings of others. He preached in a way and manner to win the hearts and affections of the people. He was refined, pleasant, kind, and winsome.

While Brother Coffman served very faithfully as a minister, he is known more widely as an evangelist. That part of his history will be discussed in a later section.

### IV. The Editor

For the Mennonite Church the nineteenth century was one of beginnings. She was beginning to employ the English language in her meetings. It was the time in which the Sunday schools were accepted into our church. The young people of the church were being strengthened. In order for there to be growth and advancement in an organization, there is a need for literature. It is good for a body to have an official paper. It is a means of uniting and strengthening the group.

It was in the summer of 1879, June 17 to be exact, that John Coffman and his

family left the beautiful Shenandoah Valley to locate in Elkhart, Indiana. John F. Funk was responsible for securing the services of John S. Coffman in behalf of the *Herald of Truth*. The *Herald of Truth* was the paper issued in behalf of the Mennonite Church. The assistance of Coffman on the staff proved to be a great stimulus. He had two aims in mind as he labored in this editorial field: First, he wanted to make the paper more interesting. Second, he wished to be more pointed on doctrines. Both of these aims materialized. The paper was made more interesting. The subscription list was greatly increased. Furthermore, as one reads through the old volumes of the *Herald of Truth* he is able to see clearly the pointed, yea piercing teaching of doctrines. In his writings, John S. Coffman comes to grips with the message on his heart. He states very definitely the matters he is anxious about. He doesn't wander idly for several hundred words, but each paragraph is full of thoughts. Every sentence carries weight. His themes are challenging. In this work, Brother Coffman exercised cautiousness, and had a great regard for the opinion of others. He was wise and counseled freely with his co-laborers.

Besides helping to edit the *Herald of Truth*, he was also made editor of the "Sunday School Lesson Helps." These helps were written to fill the need for literature in the Sunday schools. These helps were first prepared in 1890. There had been some available Sunday-school materials earlier but they proved unsatisfactory. The International Committee of the Baptist and Congregational publishing houses had issued some helps, but these were rejected by many. Then there was also the Uniform Lessons. One of their intermediate quarterlies came out advancing the theory that feet washing was not Scriptural. Just these few illustrations shows that the available materials at that time for Sunday-school use were unorthodox.

After John S. Coffman's quarterlies were issued they became very popular. By 1891 many Sunday schools were using his quarterlies. The popularity of these quarterlies spread. Presbyterian Sunday schools used them. They were in great demand. The influence of these quarterlies was also responsible in creating more interest in the Sunday schools.

In connection with the Sunday school, Brother Coffman had some very clear conceptions. He realized the great advantage, and even necessity of them, and yet he was aware of their evils. At the second General Sunday School Conference in the open discussion he said,

Some opposed attendance of their children because schools are at fault. We will do well to keep our Sunday schools clear of such impious works as are found in some of the Sunday schools in our land.

Brother Coffman's vision was again realized by the formation of the Mennonite Book and Tract Society. Brother



Coffman was editor for this society for a number of years. He was the primary organizer of this society; and he was also its first president, after its beginning in May, 1889.

By the written page the influence of Brother Coffman became greater. Soon calls came in asking for his service. It seemed he could do well whatever was assigned to him. The editor was soon to be called to a greater field, one in which his influence would be more widely spread. He was called to preach, to warn sinners of the wrath to come, and to comfort the saints.

#### *V. The Evangelist*

It is as an evangelist that Brother John S. Coffman is best known. The last fifteen years of his life were spent in traveling all over the Mennonite Church. He preached in most of the congregations that were at that time in existence.

Let us look again at the time of our brother's labors. It was a time of pioneering. Spiritually the church needed an awakening. There was corruption and sin to behold. The church was losing her young people. Then there were those men who were alive, and ready to meet the issues of the times. Men, motivated by the Spirit of God, forged ahead with the great work of the church. Revival meetings had not yet been introduced into our church. The Sunday schools were just experiencing their birth.

The English language was now being heard in the meetinghouses instead of the traditional German. Men were having visions for mission work, but as yet very little was done. Some work had already been done by printing. The influence of the press greatly advanced other efforts of the church. John S. Coffman began preaching in a time when some people were yet afraid of education and its supposedly resultant evils. The church was experiencing some painful splits, yet on the other hand some worth-while unions were effected. The church was a young one. It was in these circumstances that Brother Coffman began his work as an evangelist. His work in this way did not begin abruptly, but rather gradually. Soon his ability became known farther, in other areas. He was the Mennonite pioneer evangelist.

To show the trend of Brother Coffman's thinking let us notice a few lines from his diary.

For several days my mind has been much impressed with the necessity of more direct labor for the church, for her upbuilding and prosperity and promotion of spiritual life.

On a day or so later—

Today I have been thinking much of the necessity of the church making a more active effort to make converts. When we see what others are doing and see the success which follows their efforts, we are sorely grieved at the apathy of our own members on the subject of evangelization. I sometimes feel like cutting loose and going all the time.

In June, 1881, his first series of meetings were held at Bowne, Michigan. He answered the call from the congregation in charge of Preacher Keim. Up to this time it was customary not to hold more than two or three successive meetings. Brother Coffman held several meetings a week. Nine souls confessed Christ, the attendance was greatly increased, and many souls were revived.

Later in December, 1881, he filled appointments at Masontown, Pennsylvania. And on his return he visited Grantsville, Maryland, and Johnstown, Pennsylvania. In the winter of 1882 he held meetings in Cullom, Illinois. People of every kind attended. He held meetings in Maryland and Pennsylvania, in schoolhouses, churches and other places. He preached in many churches in the west. As far as the Mennonite settlers had gone, John Coffman went also proclaiming fearlessly the Word of Jehovah.

The churches of Virginia were hesitant to open their doors for the evangelist. It was entirely new for them. There were many young people in the valley. There was an urgent need on their behalf. They must be kept in the church. But because of the lack of activity some of the young people joined other religious groups.

During the winter of 1888, Brother Coffman was visiting his old home in Virginia. Some of the brethren asked him to hold a series of meetings. He was very cautious, because he knew that he had some opposition. Some of the men had spoken against the idea rather strongly. But Coffman went ahead with the meetings. These were the first evangelistic meetings to be held in Virginia.

Jacob Hartman, son of Peter S. Hartman, now "handy man" at Eastern Mennonite College, was in the first group of converts in these meetings. He relates the following impressive incident:

I can remember that night as if it were yesterday. Some folks were against the idea; but they attended, I imagine out of curiosity. He preached three sermons without giving an invitation. Then on the fourth night he gave an invitation. The song was, "On Jordan's Stormy Banks I Stand." He had us all thinking that we were standing on the banks of the Jordan, casting wistful eyes to Canaan's fair and happy land. Then he reminded us what we must do in order to be able to enter the beautiful land. I can still remember how vividly I saw that picture. While the song was sung, those who wanted to accept Christ were invited to go forward and sit on the front seats. People rose up all over; old men, and young. Those opposed to the meetings wept when they saw them going forward. I'll never forget that night.

By his kind and courteous manner Brother Coffman won many who opposed him. He dealt with people in the spirit of meekness. God blessed his labors. John Coffman had a very good memory, and he could remember almost all of the names of those he converted. This was of much value to him.

As our evangelist traveled about there

were always some who opposed his work. Some were prejudiced against his confidence in young people. Others didn't appreciate the leniency he manifested toward those whose opinions differed from his. Others opposed because of his zealous evangelistic endeavors, and his success along that line. Then there were those who were suspicious of his aggressive methods and graceful appearance.

Brother Coffman was very sincere, and deeply interested in the salvation of souls. He seemed at times to be so engrossed in evangelistic work that he just forgot about other minor activities. On a card written to his parents on December 11, 1882, he expressed his feelings thus:

On Saturday I came to Masontown at 8:00 p.m., too late for the evening meeting. We had a very pleasant meeting all around, but found things in rather a bad shape in some places, especially at the "Twenty" in Canada, and Erie, New York; no peace there.

Many times Coffman was called upon to help settle disputes. His gift of adaptability along with his humble spirit made him very useful in this way. Many conflicts were reconciled while still in their infancy, thus saving many misunderstandings and hurt feelings. In a letter to his parents he writes concerning some trouble which he was dealing with.

I spent over a week visiting among them there, could hardly afford it, but if as much good results from our labors as I hope, I am well paid. There are some very excellent brothers and sisters there, full of charity and forbearance. But there are some that are determined to rule or ruin. There are about fifty who want to run the machine (church), each to his own fancy. They seem presumptuous enough to take the authority to say to their brothers, you must do so and so; and withdraw the recognition of brotherhood before a brother is changed by the church. I think many are beginning to see better. I believe this present difficulty taught some good lessons.

Brother Coffman preached fearlessly and courageously. One time at a certain conference the question came up, "What shall we do to counteract the threatening worldly influences in the church? Who may be to blame?" Coffman rose to his feet, stated several undisputed facts, and then with the daring spirit of a Nathan turned toward the bishops and said, "You bishops are to blame! Why don't you get to work and ordain more of our noble young men to the ministry? They would help to defend the faith and build up your congregations." True, it was a bold venture made during his last years on earth. But he stood for a purpose and he stood nobly so long as God gave him breath. No other man at that conference would have dared to say as much without being challenged.

There is no doubt but that Brother Coffman was one of the most gifted preachers of his time. His own children as well as other friends say he always seemed to have a different way of bringing out the same point. With the power of



the Holy Spirit pouring dynamite into the words which were spoken, it is no small wonder that things moved. Yes, when Coffman was around there was activity. As a rhetorical device, he employed the use of stories and incidents to throw light upon the point he was seeking to get across.

He was a personal friend to all he knew. He would often enter the home of his members, or some other place, if away, and talk and pray with them. Perhaps he would ask them concerning their trials and difficulties. Then he would leave words of encouragement and consolation.

We dare not fail to notice the keynote of Coffman's success as an evangelist. He was a man of prayer. He literally lived the hymn, "Take it to the Lord in prayer." The following incident as related by D. H. Bender gives us an idea of his life of prayer:

Once while conducting meetings in Somerset County, Pennsylvania, the work rested heavily upon him, and just before an important meeting, that grim monster, Despondency, which so often confronts God's faithful servants in the field, began to lay hold on him to such a degree that he sorrowfully mentioned it to a confidential brother. Soon he was seen, quietly withdrawing from the gathering multitudes, sadly wending his way back through an orchard that was near the church. The brother kept an eye on him and said to himself, "He goes yonder to pray." He returned with a smiling face, sparkling eye, and beaming countenance. He preached with conviction and with power.

John Coffman's field of evangelistic work was not limited. It is said of him that he preached in all of the Mennonite churches, except about twenty. We know he went much. Even when the earth began pulling him down he kept on. One of the places that he held extensive meetings was in Canada. Early in 1891 he went to Canada for the first time. His first meeting was in Berlin. He stayed in Waterloo County for nearly three weeks, and preached in most of the churches in that district. In February of the same year he went and preached for a week in the Niagara Peninsula. He then again returned to Waterloo County. The following summary of his first trip to Canada is from his diary:

While in Canada over four weeks, I preached forty-four times and held likely more than twice that many prayer services in private houses. This was one of the most interesting seasons of my life. May God rule and overrule all to His glory.

These revivals gave the church a new impetus. Most of his converts, especially in Waterloo County, were young married people. Many of these became workers and leaders in the church. His powerful, fearless preaching and winning personality convicted and persuaded these people. In a very short time he had led more than 100 converts to Christ.

John S. Coffman held many more meetings in Ontario after his first series. How-

ever, space forbids to tell of all of them. The above was given as an example of his evangelistic efforts.

## VI. The Man

John S. Coffman was a versatile man. He did many things besides preaching. He was truly a leader. Yes, he was an organizer. He was responsible in a large way for the starting of young people's meeting. When it was his duty to be leader of the evening services, in the absence of John F. Funk, he changed the character of the meetings somewhat. The young people gradually became more interested, and they took active parts. This was about 1887.

He was also influential in starting the first General Sunday School Conference. He was moderator for several years, and served in other influential positions in this same conference body.

In 1894, when Dr. H. A. Mumaw started a business and normal school in Elkhart, Indiana, Brother Coffman had his eye open. He realized the need for educated, consecrated young people to work in the Master's vineyard. He advocated very strongly the educational movement, and several years later the Elkhart Institute, as it was later called, had grown rapidly. John S. Coffman solicited funds for a new building, and gave his help to assist the school in growing. Often on his evangelistic tours he would stand for the cause of education, and gather funds in that way to help along. He was president of the Elkhart Institute Association and was also president of the Board of Directors. He worked with untiring zeal for the cause of education. In February, 1896, the new building was completed. Coffman gave the principal address at the dedication service. Certainly if we hold to the ideals and convictions which he upheld in this address, we will never go wrong by employing education, and church schools, as a tool for more effective Christian witnessing.

The work of the Elkhart Institute had caused him much concern. He was deeply interested that it would be built up in harmony with the discipline and polity of the church. In connection with this work, he received some very unfair criticism. Some of his warmest friends and supporters turned on him in the hour of trial, and opposed his efforts. He had long been fighting upstream. The rapids of time were beginning to sweep down upon him. He began to feel pains in his stomach. From his diary we give the following extract:

My health is still in a precarious condition. The night gave me very imperfect rest. I have pains in my stomach, side and shoulders that make it almost impossible to sleep. But I will leave the whole matter to God. I am thankful that it is no worse. I will still be praising God.

Later he said, "I am willing to stay and work, but have also a desire to depart."

Several days later he was anointed by D. J. Johns and John F. Funk. Friends came to see him from far and near. Many kind notes were sent to him. It grieved them to see one who had helped them so much, now helpless, and about to be taken away. On Saturday evening, July 22, 1899, just as the sun was sinking, the Lord who leased this life to us for a while, saw best to take it back, and issue honors and blessings upon him forever. It is thought that he died of a cancerous or tuberculous growth. Others have said pneumonia was the cause of his death.

## MICHAEL SATTTLER

(Continued from page 1)

rulers; and that a believer is inducted into heavenly fellowship by baptism when he requests it, not by infant baptism.

In February, 1527, Sattler presided over a conference of Swiss Brethren in Schleithem, a Swiss village. Here was presented his confession of faith which the group adopted unanimously. The articles discussed and on which they agreed are these: (1) baptism; (2) the ban (excommunication); (3) breaking of bread; (4) separation from the abomination; (5) pastors in the church; (6) the sword; (7) the oath. A discussion of these articles would take too long and would be of doubtful value in this paper, but occasionally he passed severe judgment on the state churches; however, this must be understood in the light of sixteenth-century conditions. The state clergy was in many cases extremely carnal, and also, in January, 1527, Zurich had begun to use capital punishment on the Swiss Brethren, with the complete approval of the state church leaders. It is difficult to say, but perhaps this statement of belief had something to do with his sudden arrest.

Less than three months after the Schleithem Conference, Sattler was arrested and thrown into prison at Binzendorf. In the middle of May, 1527, he stood trial for the "heresy" of Anabaptism. His reply to the nine charges is reminiscent of Christ's answers to Pilate. Sattler's answers were short and profound. He was fully resigned to whatever was in store for him as a child of God.

The sentence pronounced upon him was that his tongue was to be cut out, then he was to be cast on a wagon, where his body was to be torn with red-hot tongs and pinched five times in the same manner. Following this merciless sentence he was burned to ashes while holding up his hands as a token of faith, a sign which he had selected beforehand to symbolize faith in Jesus Christ. Few men of only thirty-two years of age attain such heights of altruism and true heroism as this man. His death was a great loss to his contemporaries, but it may well serve as a model showing how seriously our spiritual forefathers took their religion, and it will help us to appreciate our own rich and beautiful heritage.



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## A Brief Sketch of the Origins and Growth of the Beech Mennonite Church

WILLARD S. KRABILL

Perhaps the most moving story of all human history is that of the growth of the Christian Church, including the countless episodes of sacrifice, martyrdom, and migration "for conscience' sake" on the part of the men and women whose faith has given us the Christian churches of the twentieth century. This moving story was revealed to me more personally than ever before as I studied the history and origins of my own congregation, the Beech Mennonite Church, approximately five miles northeast of Louisville, Ohio. This study challenged me to a deeper interest in and appreciation for the heritage of our own congregation, for here in this northeastern Ohio community has been enacted one of the chapters in the story of the Mennonite Church.

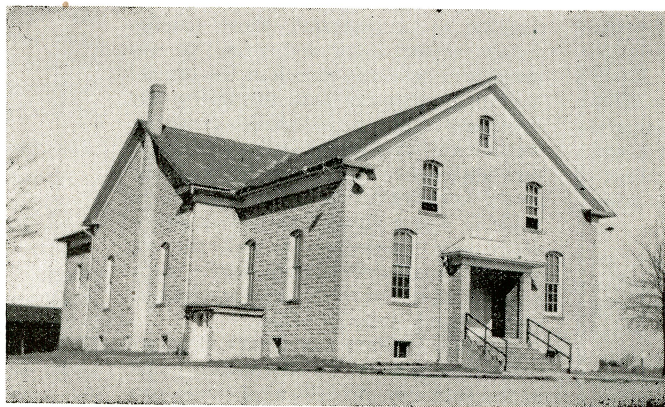
### *Origins in Europe*

To begin the story of the Beech Church we must go back to the Swiss Brethren of the seventeenth century. Prior to 1693 the Brethren had suffered no major schisms, but in this year an elder named Jacob Amman, and his followers, broke with the main body of Brethren over the question of avoidance as dealt with in Article 17 of the Dutch Dordrecht Confession of Faith. There was also involved a controversy over clothing regulations (Amman taking the stricter view), but it was only a minor issue. It should be remembered that Amman also introduced the practice of feet washing among the Brethren, having adopted it from the Dutch Mennonites. Heretofore this practice was not observed among the Swiss Brethren. The forebears of the Beech congregation were followers of the Amman party and after this time were known as Amish and considerably later as Amish Mennonites. The name "Mennonite" was more or less a nickname for the European Anabaptists, but in America it became the official name. These ancestors of ours were Swiss, but in the following years they joined the strong movement of Brethren from Berne to the province

of Alsace in France where they secured military exemption by the payment of a sum of money.

### *Migration to America*

The first large migration of Mennonites to America occurred from 1709 to 1754. This group consisted largely of Palatine Mennonites, but included some Amish Mennonites. However, these Amish were Swiss, not Alsatian, and they settled in eastern Pennsylvania. The second wave of immigration, 1815-1861, was brought about by the French government's withdrawal of military exemption to the Brethren. The Brethren petitioned the



*Beech Mennonite Church, Louisville, Ohio*

emperor, Napoleon, in vain. There were but two alternatives: either they must give up nonresistance, or they must emigrate. The founders of the Beech congregation chose to emigrate, and in so doing became a part of the large group of Alsatian Amish which migrated to North America during those early nineteenth-century years. Thus they preserved their principle of nonresistance.

There was considerable difference between these Alsatian Amish and the Swiss Amish who had come to America one hundred years before. The intervening century had seen the Alsatians grow more progressive in their thought and practice. Nevertheless, the men who founded the congregation in Stark County, Ohio, were typical Amish, with broad black hats, beards, hooks and eyes, and other distinctive characteristics.

### *Settlement in Stark County, Ohio*

The Amish community near Louisville was established by direct migration from  
(Continued on page 2)

## Samuel D. Guengerich

A. LLOYD SWARTZENDRUBER

Samuel D. Guengerich was born in Somerset County, Pennsylvania, August 25, 1836, and died January 12, 1929, near Wellman, Iowa. He married Barbara Beachy, daughter of Joel Beachy and Elizabeth Gnagy Beachy. He was the oldest son of Daniel P. and Susana Miller Guengerich.

He was a lifelong member of the Amish Church, having become a member in his youth, laboring earnestly to promote the work of the Lord in the church of his choice.

He began his education at the age of six, but in his "History of My School Days" he says, "I did not learn much." The reason he gave was that "I was young and did not know the value of learning," and "the teachers that I went to in the first years did not pay much attention to the small scholars."

His school days were somewhat interrupted by moving to Iowa when he was eight years old. He attended school again at the age of fifteen and until he was twenty, but only at intervals. This "History" gives his occupation as "carpenter and joiner trade," and says, "I took

a notion to attend the Normal School in the Borough of Salisbury in order to prepare myself for teaching." It closes with the following paragraph: "I hope by diligent study I may be progressive and by and by the qualifications with which a teacher must be endowed to facilitate him in his profession." This history is dated October, 1863, at Salisbury, Somerset County, Pennsylvania, and is signed by Samuel D. Guengerich. His teacher's certificate is dated at Millersville, Pennsylvania, September 12, 1864.

He took his preparation for teaching seriously, and in writing his assignments he wrote several essays. Some of these have been preserved and are now in the Mennonite Archives at the Mennonite Historical Library at Goshen College, at Goshen, Indiana.

In his essay on "The Value of an Education" he says, "A good education and well cultivated mind may be regarded  
(Continued on page 3)



Europe. There was no interim American home for these people. The first immigrants were Michael Schloneger, and his brother-in-law, Jacob Conrad, who settled east of Louisville in 1823, eleven years before that town was formally established. A certain John King, a Swiss Amishman from Pennsylvania, joined Conrad and Schloneger in making the early settlement near Louisville, but after a number of years he and his family moved away from the district, probably to Pennsylvania. Upon reaching Ohio, Jacob Conrad and Michael Schloneger first contacted Jacob's brother, Daniel, in Wayne County, Ohio. But after a few months they returned some thirty miles eastward and settled on land which is still owned by their descendants. As previously stated, John King soon moved away, but the Conrad and Schloneger families remained; in fact, they lived together until each had six children. Thereupon, they drew broom straws to decide which one was to move and Michael with his family moved to buildings a short distance away but on the same tract of land.

#### *Family Names*

Other Alsatian Amish soon joined this settlement. These families bore the names of Klopfenstein, Miller, Linder, Schmucker, Yoder, Becher, Ramseyer, Krabill, Sommer, and Graber. Except for Klopfenstein and Ramseyer, and including the original name of Schloneger and Conrad, the majority of present-day members of the congregation have these same names.

#### *Early Ministers*

In the early years of the settlement they worshiped in a small log meetinghouse on Michael Schloneger's farm, but they soon outgrew this structure and until 1877 meetings were held in the homes of the members. When Jacob Conrad settled near Louisville, his father Jacob soon joined him. The elder Jacob had been a minister of the church in Alsace and, therefore, in America he became the first minister of the Beech congregation. Joseph Ramseyer, another early settler, also served the church as minister. John Schloneger, the son of Michael, was the first resident bishop of the congregation, serving from 1848 to 1859. In 1863 John's brother, Michael, Jr. (who was born on the ocean), and Joseph Becher were ordained as ministers, and in 1870 Michael became bishop. David Maurer was ordained as deacon sometime before 1850, and after the death of John Schloneger in 1859 until the ordination of Michael Schloneger and Joe Becher in 1863, the leadership of the congregation was in his hands. In 1888 John Sommer was ordained a minister (died 1915), and Daniel Schmucker was ordained deacon (died 1925). John Liechty was ordained as a minister in 1903, and though he moved to Orrville he still visited and served the church regularly until his death in 1947.

#### *The Change to "Amish Mennonite"*

The one-hundred-year interval between the Swiss and Alsatian Amish immigra-

tions became more significant in the middle of the nineteenth century. The Alsatian groups such as the Beech congregation (which had become more progressive during the century intervening) began to worship in churches, introduced a few modern innovations, and attempted to organize an Amish Mennonite General Conference. This attempt failed, however, and the differences between the two groups became more evident. The more liberal conference group was soon known as "Hoch Amish" while the more conservative anti-conference group was known as "Nieder Amish" or the "Old Order." The Beech Church became one of the Amish Mennonite congregations which was organized into the Ohio District Conference in 1893. In 1897 the Amish Mennonite churches of Pennsylvania joined the district conference and it became known as the Eastern A.M. Conference.

#### *Location of Church Building*

In 1877 the Beech congregation built a meetinghouse on the site of the present building. There was some controversy as to whether the church should be located east of Louisville near the site of the old Schloneger cemetery or at a more central location to accommodate those families living farther north and west. It was decided to build the church at the present central location, but until the 1890's they continued to use the old Amish cemetery. At this time they established a new cemetery adjacent to the church building, and in the late 1930's interments began to be made in a new addition to this cemetery. It is very interesting to visit the old Amish burial plot located on the farm now owned by one of the present ministers of the church, John D. Miller.

The first building was a brick structure with the entrance at the east and the pulpit at the west end. In 1908 an addition was built onto the south side. The entrance was changed at this time to its present location on the south and the pulpit was moved to the north.

#### *Remodeling*

When a windstorm damaged the church building on April 1, 1929, it was decided to remodel the church. In the meantime, services were held Sunday afternoons at the Center Church of the Brethren southwest of Louisville. The young people's Bible meeting was held conjointly with the young people of the Canton Mission. The interior of the building was refinished, the benches were replaced, and an addition was made on the north side to provide classrooms for Sunday school. In 1939 the basement was completed, providing indoor toilet facilities, quarters for the primary Sunday school, and facilities for the serving of meals to conference or chorus guests. At this time also, two oil-burning furnaces were installed. Thus the church stands today as a large, modern, convenient building equipped to serve the congregation in every way.

#### *Early Practices and Customs*

Church practices and attitudes of the Beech congregation were similar to those

of the other A.M. congregations of this period. The bishop's word was law in the local congregation. All preaching was in German until after the ordination of J. A. Liechty in 1903, but after the death of John Sommer in 1915 nearly all services were in English. With the death of Deacon Daniel Schmucker in 1925 the German language was dropped entirely. The attitude of the church on clothing regulations is evidenced by the fact that as late as 1888 Bishop Michael Schloneger refused to marry a couple until the brother bought a new suit with hooks and eyes. But such things as beards, hooks and eyes, and severe dress regulations ended with the Ohio Amish Mennonite Conference in 1893, and all such Amish customs gradually disappeared. In 1912 questions were raised as to whether a certain brother should be permitted in the lot for the ministry because he owned an automobile, but a major issue never developed. The lot was employed as the method of choosing the ministry until 1903 when J. A. Liechty received the majority of votes for nomination as minister and was thereupon ordained. The lot was used again in 1912 when John D. Miller was ordained, and also in 1915 when Alvin Hostetler was ordained. Since 1915, however, the lot has never been used, and the present bishop and deacon were chosen by vote of the congregation.

#### *The Sunday School*

A union Sunday school was conducted as early as 1876 in the Scenery Hall Schoolhouse, by three men in the community: Jacob Ramseyer (an Amish Mennonite), Ephraim Pickens (a United Brethren), and a Stuckey (a Dunkard minister). Due to the efforts of Jacob Ramseyer, a Sunday school was organized at the Beech in 1881 but was discontinued for several years due to extreme opposition. It was resumed permanently in 1888 with the newly ordained John Sommer and Daniel Schmucker as the first superintendents. It was held only every two weeks, however, until about 1900.

#### *Reasons for the Migration to America*

It is well for us of the present generation to remember the motivating factors that brought our fathers to this country. As I previously mentioned, the refusal of the French emperor, Napoleon, to grant religious freedom in the way of military exemption largely prompted the Alsatian Amish emigration of the nineteenth century. This, then, was the situation responsible for the migration to Stark County, Ohio, even as late as the 1870's. The example of Peter Graber will serve as an illustration. When Peter was about to be drafted into military service he left his home in Alsace and started for America, going through Belgium in order to be outside French borders as soon as possible. When the French authorities called to summon him several days later, Peter was gone. Peter did get to America, and the following year his parents, brothers, and sisters, as well as other relatives joined him and settled



north of Canton, Ohio, where they joined the Beech A.M. Church. Peter Graber was a faithful member of the congregation until his death in November, 1937.

*The Church Today*

Now let us look at the church as it is today after a century of growth and progress. Nearly four hundred are enrolled in the Sunday school and there are 363 members of the congregation. A mixed chorus presents programs of music on special occasions. Over twenty Sunday-school classes meet every Sunday. O. N. Johns has served the church as bishop and pastor since 1925. John D. Miller (ordained in 1912) is the only minister since the death in 1943 of Alvin Hostetler, who was ordained in 1915 to replace John Sommer. The present deacon is John Sommers (ordained in 1936), a son of the minister who served from 1888 to 1915. Mahlon O. Krabill has served as superintendent of the Sunday school consecutively since 1926. Several thousand dollars are handled annually by the various treasurers of the church organizations. A monthly tithe offering of from \$500 to \$1200 is taken and all expenses and contributions are paid from this monthly offering. Two sewing circles, a young people's literary society, an annual Sunday-school outing, a men's brotherhood, and the home relief committee are some of the other activities and organizations. The ministry is supported by freewill offerings. Excellent congregational singing prevails. Harvey Sommers was one of the leading choristers of the previous generation and did much to maintain high standards of congregational singing. At the present time, missions, relief work, and church schools are actively supported. During World War II some \$20,000 was contributed to Civilian Public Service support.

*Mission Station*

Since the summer of 1938 the congregation has had a mission station in near-by Stoner Heights. This work was begun largely due to the efforts of Mr. and Mrs. Orris Yoder, and the first few meetings were held at their home. But the Beech Sunday School financed the construction of a building and the meetings have been held there since 1939. Lloyd Conrad was the first superintendent and was succeeded by Orris Yoder.

*Merger with Mennonites*

In 1926 the Beech congregation and the other Amish Mennonite congregations of the Eastern A.M. Conference merged with the Ohio Mennonite Conference, and thus since that time the congregation has been known as the Beech Mennonite Church.

Louisville, Ohio.

(This essay was awarded first prize in the 1948-1949 Mennonite history college essay contest.—M. G.)

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SAMUEL D. GUENGERICH

(Continued from page 1)

almost indispensable in many respects," and "Mental occupations are a pleasing relief from bodily exertions . . ."

After his preparation for teaching was completed he taught for a number of years. He was teaching in the Deer Creek School in 1904. He helped organize the German School Association which served the church from 1890 to 1916. Among some of his writings was found a paper giving "Principal Rules of the School." Rule 8 reveals some of the problems of his day. It says, "Rule 8, No bringing of pistols, powder, fire-crackers or anything of the kind to school." Number 9 of these same rules says, "All that we need is . . . good manners and thinking heads and feeling hearts."

He was also instrumental in the organization of Sunday schools as early as 1871 (American Sunday School Roll Book). This book lists S. D. Guengerich as superintendent, John B. Miller as assistant, and Mike Bender as secretary. The classes were conducted in German and English. The location of this school was not given but it was in Iowa County, Iowa. The White Hall Sunday School Register is among the above-named papers, being dated 1883. He was very active in this school.

Among the "Rules of the Pleasant Union Sabbath School" were the following (no date given):

4, All persons who become members of the Sabbath School shall strictly conform to its rules.

5, (Violators) . . . shall be discharged from school.

6, Discharged persons could be reinstated only after they "Faithfully promise to do better and conform to the rules of the school."

7, Spectators and visitors are also required to obey the rules. . . .

10, After exercises have commenced no member is allowed to leave or change seats.

His religious convictions are attested to by the fact that he was exempt from military duty during the Civil War by paying a service fee of \$300, the receipt being dated 1865. Two letters from Senator C. S. Rank of Iowa City indicate that he (Guengerich) was instrumental in getting a law on the Iowa Statutes, exempting people from jury duty because of religious convictions. These letters dated January 21 and April 4, 1896, promise to make an attempt to "pass the amendment and secure exemption." (Code of Iowa 1897, Section 333, and Senate Journal 1896.)

Among his business ventures was the Deer Creek Mills Dairy Association. The place of business was near the Hickory Grove School, on Deer Creek. The association engaged in the manufacture of butter. Farmers brought their milk to the plant where it was separated and they could take their skim milk along

home and the cream was then processed. The Articles of Incorporation were filed March 16, 1895 (Menn. Archives).

In his later years he was quite active in his little print shop where he did some writing, bookbinding, and printing. He printed a number of tracts and leaflets. He had a small supply of books and other articles for sale, though he never really commercialized in this work.

In 1878 he launched the monthly paper entitled "Der Christliche Jugend-Freund." This paper was published especially in the interest of Sunday schools. In the first number he began a continued article on "Geschichte und Ursprung der Sonntagschule" (History and Origin of the Sunday School), which was run for a number of months. In his introduction to this article he says that since the paper is published especially in the interest of the Sunday school, he hoped that as people read it they will become more zealous supporters of this important work (the work of the Sunday school).

He was also instrumental in the success of "Der Herold der Wahrheit," which paper is still in circulation in 1949. He was editor and manager at its beginning and at his death was editor of the German part.

His zeal for the proper training of his children is shown by the method in which his family entertained company. When children came to play on Sunday afternoon he would gather them all into the living room where he would take from his desk a book, usually the Bible, and would read for some time, after which the children were permitted to spend the remainder of the afternoon in play.

Though he was never ordained to the ministry, never was appointed as a leader in a conference, nor was he the official leader in a church, his influence and zeal made its impression upon the people of his day. Samuel D. Guengerich died at his home in Johnson County, Iowa, on January 12, 1929, at the age of 92 years.

Kalona, Iowa.

THE INDEX FOR VOLUMES I-X of the MENNONITE HISTORICAL BULLETIN

The index for volumes I-X inclusive of the MENNONITE HISTORICAL BULLETIN has been inserted in the January 1950 number. We hope it will prove to be useful to the BULLETIN subscribers. The editors are offering for \$5.00 each the ten year collection of HISTORICAL BULLETINS bound in an attractive hard cover. The number of sets bound will be determined by the number of advance orders. Send your order to Melvin Gingerich, 1613 South Eighth, Goshen, Indiana, or to Ira D. Landis, Route 3, Lititz, Pa.

In September, 1950, a sample copy of the BULLETIN was mailed to every Sunday school superintendent in the Mennonite Church along with a letter giving the above offer. They were urged to call the attention of their Sunday school library committees to this opportunity of obtaining a complete bound set of the BULLETINS for their libraries.



## Book Reviews

Harold S. Bender: *Conrad Grebel, c. 1498-1526, the founder of the Swiss Brethren, sometimes called Anabaptists. Studies in Anabaptist and Mennonite History*, No. 6. The Mennonite Historical Society, Goshen College, Goshen, Indiana, 1950; xvi & 326; \$3.50.

The publication of this long-expected book by Dean Bender marks a significant step forward in our knowledge of the background and early history of Anabaptism, written not from the outside by a disinterested scholar but with the warmth of one who feels the great legacy of the forefathers in his own lifeblood. H. S. Bender has long been a leader in the revivification of the original Anabaptist vision so little known hitherto by both scholars and Mennonite church members. He naturally saw the need for a thorough, scholarly, and yet sympathetic investigation into the very beginnings of Anabaptism during the Age of Reformation. As far as we know the very first Anabaptist brotherhood sprang up in Zurich, Switzerland (then under the sway of the Reformer Zwingli). The man who was the unquestioned leader of this bold, small group of committed disciples of Christ was Conrad Grebel, son of a noble family and an outstanding humanist of his own merit. On January 21, 1525, upon request, Grebel baptized Jörg Blaurock, a former Catholic priest of Grisonia, who in turn then baptized Grebel and the rest of the group present. Eighteen months later Grebel fell victim to the plague and died, hardly twenty-eight years old. The church of the Swiss Brethren (Anabaptists) was definitely established, and in blood and martyrdom started its way up—not too successful in Switzerland proper, and yet, at last, becoming the very leader of all free church movements of Protestantism.

Bender's book gives us a highly stimulating story; it is good reading, and contains much material to be thought through. The scholarship is amazing (over 60 pages in small print of notes), the judgment is everywhere fair and restrained, conclusions always well founded. The Appendix contains a foretaste of a planned second volume with Grebel's writings, presenting ten lengthy condensations, besides bibliography and so on. Eight plates add visual charm to the book.

It is not only the external and internal life story of Grebel which attracts the student of the great beginnings (and the inner story is made exceedingly vivid by interspersed quotations), the most valuable contribution seems to be chapter IX, "Things Most Surely Believed: Grebel's Theology." Here the basic tenets, still treasured today by most Mennonites, are put together from scanty sources. The center appears to be the idea of a "suffering church" which is to expect persecution from an unchristian world. Grebel's famous epistle to Thomas Müntzer is here the chief witness. On the

concluding six pages Bender evaluated the significance of Grebel and of the "Swiss Brethren" in the history of the Christian Church. It is the idea of uncompromising and committed discipleship which is recognized as the most important contribution of Anabaptism as it was first conceived among the Brethren of Zurich and their leader, the valiant and unswerving witness of Christ, Conrad Grebel.

Kalamazoo, Mich.

Robert Friedmann.

Melvin Gingerich: *Youth and Christian Citizenship*, Herald Press, Scottdale, Pennsylvania, 1949; \$2.00.

One of the major issues in Christian history and thought is the relation of the Christian to the state. It is not a simple issue. The subject is further complicated by the fact that Christians are now, in the United States and Canada, standing in a tradition altogether different from the Roman state in which Paul stood when he wrote his great words of counsel to the Roman Church. Rom. 13. At that time the ruler was Nero, although Paul wrote before the full wickedness of Nero's heart had come to light. The great task of the state seen in Romans 13 is the maintenance of law and order. Christians are urged by the apostle to submit to the state authorities because their task is to punish evildoers and to "praise" those who do well. The Obbenites, the Swiss Brethren, and the Hutterian Brethren understood the words of the apostle to mean the living of a non-resistant life, to turn the other cheek when smitten, not to sue at law, and the like.

The modern state, however, does much more than deal with crime and evil. The state has broadened its function until it now covers a multitude of items not thought of by Nero and his kind. It was therefore necessary that someone should think through the relation of the twentieth-century American to his government. To be of the greatest value to Mennonites it was highly desirable that this writer should also hold to the position of Biblical nonresistance. The writer also needed to be a scholar if he was to make the best possible contribution to the field. Yet his style needed to be clear and simple, not encumbered with the impediments of formal scholarship. These various requirements were happily met in Dr. Melvin Gingerich. Our author comes of a strong line of Amish Mennonite leaders; he is an alumnus of Goshen College, having taken work also at Heston College; he has his Ph. D. degree from the University of Iowa with a dissertation on the Mennonites of Iowa; and he holds personally to the historic Mennonite faith. The book measures up to what one would expect; it is an excellent presentation in clear English of a wide range of studies dealing with the issues which all thinking people confront today. About two thirds of the chapters were published in their original form in the *Youth's Christian Companion*, and

were subsequently revised for publication in this book.

The reviewer would join in the wish of Harold S. Bender, chairman of the Peace Problems Committee of the Mennonite Church, which he writes in the Introduction: "May our youth find in it a valued source of vision, inspiration, and wisdom for the day in which they live."

Goshen, Indiana. J. C. Wenger.

## Minutes of Ohio Conference a Century Ago

IRA D. LANDIS

The following minutes of one of the earliest Ohio Mennonite conferences can be seen in the Chester Township, Wayne County, Ohio, Old Order Mennonite Church, in German today. William B. Martin, Wooster, R. 5, has the translation of the same. It displays the practice of these pioneering brethren, consistent with our historic Scriptural position, but gives the names of the early leaders, some otherwise unknown.

"First, we confess it is not allowed (us) to meet the enemy with the sword, nor to go into military training.

"Second, we confess it is not allowed to hold worldly offices, nor to go to the election to vote, except for road supervisor, poor director and school director.

"Third, we confess it is not allowed to take any part as a juror in any worldly case whatever.

"Fourth, it is not allowed to use the worldly court to seek our rights.

"Fifth, we confess it is not allowed to follow the worldly fashions of dress.

"Sixth, it is not allowed to marry anyone outside the church. If any one violates this ruling, he falls under censure."

Undersigned brethren,  
Jacob Muschler  
Henry Stemen  
Isaac Wilmer  
Abraham Rohrer  
John Miller  
Henry Stauffer

N. B. Henry Stemen lived in Fairfield County, b. 1780, d. 1858. Abraham Rohrer of Lancaster County was in Medina County by 1832, bishop 1836, b. 1788, d. 1878, The rest I have not located. If you can, that would give more historical significance to this document. Stemen's death places it prior to 1858, possibly the rest even earlier, fixing it between 1843 and that date. The location of above would give the leaders in other sections of Ohio. Ashland County had three defunct congregations and others also.

Lititz, Pennsylvania.